

# News Release



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ANGEL  
ISLAND  
IMMIGRATION  
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## "They won't survive another winter..."

### **Race Against Winter Seeks to Preserve More Historic Writings at Angel Island**

ANGEL ISLAND -- "They are another fragile part of the story of this island. They are in a building that is deteriorating before our very eyes, and we do not think they will survive another harsh winter." The comment comes with some sadness from Katherine Toy, Executive Director of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF). Toy is talking about the newest set of writings and drawings to be found at the Angel Island Immigration Station, one of the units of the California State Park System.

For years, people have known about and visited the extensive poetry and other writings found in the detention barracks building. However, few people have known about the additional writings and drawings found in the nearby hospital building. Fewer still have actually been able to see them because the hospital has been deteriorating for years and is not safe for the public. The building is in extremely poor condition, with a leaky roof and crumbling walls, a condition that grows worse with every passing winter.

California State Parks and the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation decided it was time to act, before it was too late. They decided that since there is not yet any funding for restoration of the hospital, something had to be done in the interim to save the writings and drawings inside. This week, in a delicate operation, skilled conservators will carefully pry sections of plaster from the walls of the hospital building. Those sections contain more stories, comments and drawings that depict the lives of the thousands of Asian Immigrants who passed through the station. Those plaster sections will be packaged and preserved to insure their survival.

"Preserving all of the writings and drawings from this historic place helps us understand the people who were here and their spirit," said Darci Moore, State Parks Interpreter II at Angel Island State Park. "Every tiny scrape of what we find adds depth to the story and helps us

preserve a legacy that is a part of the untold story of American History. So as long as we can, as much as we can, we will keep digging for the whole story, the hospital writings and drawings giving us one more chapter.”

The Angel Island Immigration Foundation serves as the community steward of the Immigration Station, raising money and working to preserve the station and its history in a partnership with California State Parks and the National Park Service. In funding thus far, about \$15-million comes from Proposition 12, the Park Bond Act passed by voters in 2000. Another \$500,000 comes from a Save America’s Treasures federal grant secured by AIISF. This funding is only enough for Phase I of a five-phase process. It including design work, stabilization and restoration of several key buildings on the grounds, but not the hospital, which is scheduled for restoration in Phase III.

U.S. Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-Petaluma) is working to bring federal dollars to the Immigration Station, and to the hospital in particular. “Angel Island isn’t just important to California, but is important to the nation,” said Rep. Woolsey. “I am proud that work to preserve the poetry, writings and drawings left by these immigrants will begin and I will continue to support the Angel Island restoration efforts on Capitol Hill. Together we must ensure that their legacy is not forgotten.”

The U.S. Immigration Station at Angel Island, located in the San Francisco Bay, was the main point of entry for more than one-million immigrants who came to America between 1910 and 1940. The Immigration Station’s most poignant story is tied to the Asian immigrants, predominantly Chinese, who were detained for weeks or months due to laws which excluded Asian immigrants from the United States. Detention was a harsh shock to those who felt they were coming to a new life. In their sadness and anger, they poured out their feelings and frustrations in poetry, writings and drawings. Most are found on the walls of the detention barracks building, but more recently, writings and drawings were discovered in the deteriorating hospital building.

Phase I of the project is scheduled to be completed by 2005. As future funding becomes available, State Parks will begin future phases of the work. It is hoped that the entire project can be completed by 2010.

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